

State Procurement Office
Procurement of Health and Human Services
Chapter 103F, HRS

FAQ
Frequently Asked Questions
Requests for Information (RFI)

	Question	Response
1	What is an RFI?	An RFI (Request for Information) is a tool used to gather, share and clarify information when state agencies conduct planning activities for health and human services.
2	Does there have to be a public notice for an RFI?	No. An RFI can be written, oral, faxed, e-mailed, or any combination of these. Notice of an RFI may be placed on the Procurement Notices System (PNS) website. <i>Reference §3-142-202 (a), HAR</i>
3	What can be addressed in an RFI?	An RFI can address any subject relevant to a state agencies planning activities such as, the goals and objectives, target population or clients to be served, services that are necessary to reach the goal, service specifications, feasibility issues, or cost factors. <i>Reference §3-142-202 (b), HAR</i>
4	Does an RFI have to involve a meeting?	No. An RFI can be done via fax, e-mail or mail. It can even be done via a website. See question No. 2.
5	Who must a purchasing agency invite to respond to an RFI? Does every provider have to be invited to respond?	No. It can be sent to any knowledgeable person or entity that the purchasing agency deems advisable. Keep in mind the principal of open government. A purchasing agency would not want to invite only one or two providers to respond if there are other providers or stakeholders interested in the target group or service. In the extreme this could be an anti-competitive practice. In addition, keep in mind that an RFI is not just for provider input but also for input from consumers, community groups and other interested parties or stakeholders. A good way of getting the word out is by placing a notice of an RFI on the Procurement Notices System (PNS) website. <i>Reference §3-142-202 (a), HAR</i>
6	If a provider participates in an RFI are they then excluded from responding to the solicitation?	No. Collaboration with private providers is encouraged in state planning activities to facilitate efficiency, responsiveness and organization in meeting the health and human service needs of Hawaii's people. Uncompensated provider participation is encouraged. Keep in mind that collaboration does not constitute an exemption from anti-competitive practices. See question No. 5. <i>Reference 3-142-203, HAR.</i>

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7	What are some ways to ensure that interested parties are aware of the RFI?	As a state agency with a history of serving a particular population or addressing a particular problem you probably have access to most of the interested parties. Some sources for reaching interested parties are: advisory groups, task forces that address the client population or the issue being addressed, professional organizations or professional publications. Although state agencies do not have to publish a public notice, it is permissible. Placing a notice of the RFI on the Procurement Notices System (PNS) website is highly recommended.
8	What must be in an RFI?	<p>There are 4 basic elements that must be in an RFI.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A description of the information being sought. The more specific the questions, the more likely respondents will address the areas about which you have concerns.2. The procedure for responding. (Place and location of a meeting, address to send comments, etc.)3. A statement that participation is optional, and is not required to respond to any subsequent procurement.4. A statement that neither the purchasing agency nor the interested party has any obligation under the request for information. <p><i>Reference §3-142-202 (c), HAR</i></p>
9	How often should state agencies conduct an RFI?	It is recommended RFI's be conducted each time a state agency plans to solicit services or at least once every four years. This will help to ensure the most efficient and effective services are procured and will decrease the number of problems with and need for amendments to solicitations. Depending on the complexity of the service or the issue being addressed it may be advisable to conduct more than one RFI. For instance, one RFI might be conducted early in the process to obtain feedback on a configuration of services a state agency is considering. After obtaining feedback and analyzing it, a second RFI containing a draft of service specifications may be issued to obtain additional feedback.
10	Is an RFI to be used only for the competitive (RFP) method of procurement?	No. An RFI can be used with other methods as well. For instance, if a state agency is contemplating a restrictive purchase of service, issuing an RFI will may help to discover whether other providers are interested in providing the service.

Questions or comments should be directed to Mara Smith at (808) 587-4704 or mara.smith@hawaii.gov or Corinne Higa at (808) 587-4706 or corinne.y.higa@hawaii.gov or fax us at (808) 587-4703.